he is held, is unique. One day he could assure the House of Commons that the British Air Force was superior to that of any conceivable hostile combination of European Powers, and a few days later explain that he had been misinformed, and that in fact Germany had an overwhelming superiority in the air; announcing a large-scale rearmament programme, he could casually remark that if he had let it be known at a recent General Election that he favoured rearming, seats might have been lost to the Opposition; and still as he stumped down Whitehall, or across the Park for his early morning walk, the cries of 'Good old Baldwin!' were as cordial as ever, and the cheers at constituency meetings as tumultuous. He has found less difficulty in jettisoning a colleague than others experience in giving a housemaid notice, and shown himself capable of doing effortlessly what the most ingenious and unscrupulous minds vainly attempt—induce his fellow countrymen to buy, and even read, books on his recommendation. A word from him in praise of Mary Webb resulted in a sale of not less than a million copies of her formerly little read works.[3]

This remarkable man sprang suddenly from obscurity into prominence in 1922.* When Bonar Law died, and Curzon con-

[3] That he alone is capable of this outstanding feat is indicated by the fact that when Mr. Neville Chamberlain succeeded him as Prime Minister he failed to repeat it. The sales-resistance of the public successfully withstood Mr. Chamberlain's statement, at a Royal Literary Fund Banquet, that his 'favourite romances are those of the elder Dumas, and that long superb series left to us by Joseph Conrad, with his wonderful word painting and his haunting sense of ever-present mystery.'

[4] His first important office was Financial Secretary of the Treasury, to which he was appointed in 1917. In 1919 he wrote a letter to *The Times* signed F.S.T., proposing that the 'wealthy classes* should voluntarily contribute a portion of their wealth towards reducing the enormous burden of national debt which had accumulated, and as a gesture signifying awareness of the gravity of the financial situation, and that 'love of country is better than love of money.' For his own part, he proposed to lay out ^120,000 (a fifth of his total wealth) on the purchase of War Loan, which he would present to the Government for cancellation. At the time, no one connected